

BACKGROUND

In the Office Action, mailed on April 3, 2001, paper no. 6, the Office rejected claims 1 - 19 as being allegedly obvious in view of de Boer (SPE Production & Facilities 1995) and Gopinathan (U.S. patent no. 5,853,994). The Office also rejected claims 1-11, 15-22, and 24-26 under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being allegedly unpatentable over claims 1-10 of U.S. patent no. 5,969,237. Applicant appealed the Office's final rejections of the claims to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences. On November 25, 2003, the Board rendered its decision in favor of Applicant with respect to the obviousness rejection of claims 1-19. The Board, however, sustained the double patenting rejection of claims 1-11, 15-22, and 24-26. Subsequently, the Office issued a Notice of Allowance in which the Office allowed only an amended claim 23. Claim 23 was amended by an Examiner's Amendment.